

MERCATOR:

O R,

Commerce Retrieved,

B E I N G

CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the *British Trade, &c.*

From Saturday, March 13. to Tuesday, March 16. 1713.

- The ridiculous Notion of the French Engrossing the Trade of Europe, farther Exposed.*
If the French were Masters of our Wool, our Navigation and our other Advantages of Commerce, they would not act as we do.
They would not limit their own Trade, or prohibit the Export of their own Goods, but extend them to all Parts of the Universe.
The fear of being over-ballanced in Returns, is absurd, when as it appears, we are at Liberty to load those Returns with what Duties we please, even to a Prohibition.
The new way of Magnifying the French which People have now taken up, very fatal to us many ways, but especially in our Commerce.
All Rivals in Trade are in Porportion to be opposed.
The Dutch, none of our best Friends in Trade, tho' they may be so in other Matters.

THE present Subject is the Complaint that the French bid fair for Engrossing all the Trade in the World. *Vide Crisis, p. 31.* it must be confessed, if the French were Inhabitants of Great Britain, they would have some Claim to what that Author says of them, because it appears by their Vigilance and Application in promoting their National Interests, that they would not be wanting to themselves as we are; they would not limit and contract their Trade, but extend it; they would not prohibit their own Manufactures, and straighten their Merchants from Exporting the Growth of their own Country, and the Labour of their own Poor. Such absurd ridiculous Notions as these would never obtain among them, no nor among us neither, if we were not under a wretched unhappy Infatuation of Parties, whereby we appear willing to sacrifice our Common Interests to those who for their private Interest find it necessary at this time to influence us one against another.

Would the French if they inhabited this Nation, and were as we are, Masters of such noble Principles of Commerce, as our Wool, our Produce, our Situation and Shipping, would they shut out their own Manufactures from a Country so near them, whose Extent is a fifth Part of the Trading Part of Europe, and in which so many Millions of People inhabit, and who in spite of all their Industry, are not able to supply themselves with Manufactures, the Materials being by Nature deny'd them? Would the French if they liv'd in this Country refuse a Trade which would vend Six hundred thousand Pound a Year in their Manufactures, and all for that idle ridiculous Pretence of France pouring in a Glut of Wine and Brandy to over-Balance them, when at the same time they have it in their Power to load those Goods with such Duties as should lessen, nay indeed prohibit their Importation, as it is evident we may do by the Treaty?

No, no, assure your selves the People of France would be none of these Fools, neither would we, ex-

cept as before excepted, which is the Misery of our present Circumstances.

But as to what was said before of the Inability of the French to Engross the Trade of Europe, it is the most unaccountable Expression, that the *MERCATOR* cannot but wonder such a thing could fall from an Author so knowing in the World.

That a Nation that has no Wool but what they buy or steal, as it may be called, from other Nations; No Dye-Stuffs but what they buy at Second-hand; no Artists but what they borrow or hire from other Countries, should Engross the Woollen Manufactures.

Let this Author turn the Tables, and tell us if we had no Wool but what we fetcht with the same Difficulty and Expence from France, as the French do our Wool from England or Ireland; what a Blow would it be to our Manufactures, and if our Neighbours had Wool at home, as we have, what could we make of our Manufactures? And above all, what could we make of our Foreign Trade? If we had few or no Colonies in the West-Indies, as is the Case of the French, and were to buy our Logwood, Fustic, and other Dying Woods of them, as they do now of us: If we fetch'd our Allom and Copperas and other Home-materials in France, as they do from England, would the Dearness of these Things affect our Manufactures or no? Would it assist our Neighbours to undersell us no? But above all should we under all these Difficulties be able to Engross the Trade of the World or no?

The *MERCATOR* hears a great many People answer these Things, by telling us what great Quantities of Wool the French get from England and from Ireland, and it has really too much Truth in it. The *MERCATOR* wishes heartily it might be prevented, and doubts not but there are Measures which might be taken effectually to prevent it.

Now

Now it is confess'd this Clandestine Exportation of Wooll is very hurtful to England, and furnishes the French so to supply themselves with Manufactures as to stand in the less need of ours. But no Man can be so foolish as to say, that when the French are at all those Difficulties to fetch their Wooll, and to get it where they fetch it, that they can do this, and make their Manufactures as Cheap as we can, who have all among Ourselves.

358 Tho' it be true, that they do get a great deal of Wooll from us, yet let us observe one thing with it, What Price do they give for it here? And what Charges are they at to get it? And what does it Cost them before they get it home to those Places where they make use of it.

It may be remember'd, that some of our Prints lately gave us an Account of a Skirmish in Kent among the Country People and the Custom-house Officers, about carrying off some Packs of Wooll, in which some Lives were lost, as is too often the Case. It was observable, and this is the end of mentioning it here, that the Reason given for a certain Country Farmer venturing to be concern'd in such a Business, was the extraordinary Price those OULERS, as they are called, give for their Wooll; and we know very well they do so, and that they will give 12l. for as much Wooll as would otherwise yield but 7 l. add to this, the Charges of Vessels double Mann'd, those Men in consideration of the Danger always double paid, then add the hazard of Loss, and last of all the Profit of the Adventure, which, if it was not great, no Man would undertake it: Put all these together, and what must our English Wooll be worth in France, when it comes to the Hand of the Manufacturer? The *MERCATOR* is well assured, from very well-experienced Hands, that as much Wooll as in England will not yield above 17 to 19 s. Sterling, is sold in France to the Manufacturers there for 50 s. Sterling. Let any one judge then, whether these People are likely to be Engrossers of our Manufactures, and if not of our Manufactures, how will they Engross the Trade of the World?

If these Men have no better Foundation for their fears of the French King Engrossing the Power of Europe than they have for this of their Trade, or if we were to judge of one by the other, they would very ill Account for all the fears which they put into our Heads upon that score.

The *MERCATOR* meddles very little with those things, but takes leave to say One thing which Concerns

them both, (viz.) That if England takes care to make herself strong by Sea, to Improve and Establish her Naval Strength, as she may do, and as it is hoped she will now do; there can be no Danger either of the French, or of any other Nation Engrolling the Power or the Trade of Europe.

Her Majesty has lately given us an Item or Memorandum of this from the Throne, (viz.) That our Situation makes us able to raise ourselves by Trade, and Trade alone is the Thing by which this Nation can flourish; and that our Naval Strength is the Security of our Commerce.

These are Truths never to be withstood; And when Reason and Truth come to obtain a Hearing again among us, as it is to be hoped they may hereafter, tho' they cannot have that Privilege now. We shall see that these things will appear Solid and Weighty; and the Opposers of them, who are now exalting the Power of the French to Ruine and Engross our Trade, will appear extremely Ridiculous.

This new way of raising a Dread of the French upon us in every thing, as well in our Trade as in our Publick Affairs, is a Method which, however some People think convenient for their other Designs at this time, may, and it cannot be questioned but it will, be both pernicious and of ill Consequence to this Nation in time to come, and is very fatal to us in Matters relating to our Commerce at this time. But the wise People of this Age are not to be told their true Interest.

The *MERCATOR* is for fencing our Commerce against every Rival, and equally in proportion, for proportion is equality: Against every Rival He ill defends his Country, who to keep out one Thief lets in another. To call in the Dutch to defend our Commerce against the French, acts like the Old Britons, who call'd in the Saxons to help them against the Picts, who did the first indeed, but devoured the People they came to help.

The *MERCATOR* believes the Dutch very good Friends, and very necessary Allies for strengthening the general Interest of the Protestant Powers, and would by no means lessen the Friendship between the Two Nations; but he cannot agree to believe them the same Friends to our Commerce that they are to our Power; and had much rather call for their Assistance in our Councils of War than in our Council of Trade; of which more may be said in the next *MERCATOR*.



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